

# Creating Effective AIS Outreach to Change Behavior

Bob Wiltshire  
Invasive Species Action Network  
Livingston, MT

# Noxious Weed Outreach

- Prevention is important but noxious weed control is both possible and practical
- Most outreach is geared toward identifying and reporting weeds to allow for rapid control - EDRR
  - Emphasis on learning to recognize invader
  - Action response is easily communicated
  - Action is easily completed (low cost)

# AIS Outreach

- Established AIS cannot be controlled or managed
  - Aquatic habitats don't invite targeted control
  - Control strategies are not selective
- EDRR has limited effectiveness
  - Most AIS become established before detected
  - Few, if any, control actions are available
- Prevention is the only practical solution

# Prevention is best accomplished through outreach

- Regulation is important but the public will not be inspired to take action just through regulation
- Prevention is most effective when all segments of the public are participating in the effort
- Outreach efforts must inspire voluntary compliance to be broadly accepted



# The key to prevention is changing behavior

- Traditional product based outreach often results in increased awareness but little if any behavior change
- It is not enough for people to know that AIS are a problem. They must know what to do and they must do it.
- To be effective we must change behavior

# Social Marketing

- "The planned implementation of programs designed to bring about social change using concepts from commercial marketing"
- The ultimate objective of social marketing is to influence action

# Key components of a social marketing outreach effort

- Identify desired outcomes
- Identify best time, place and method for reaching target group
- Develop the program needed to support effort

# Identify desired outcomes and specific audience

- There is no such thing as "The Public"
  - Layer upon layer of overlapping groups
- No single outcome applies to everyone - develop specific outcomes for specific groups
  - Anglers & boaters need to clean their boats and gear
  - Game wardens need to incorporate an AIS message into every public contact



# Identify best method for reaching target group

- “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail”  
Andrew Maslow
- Effective programs reach the targeted audience with messages that appeal directly to them. One size does not fit all!

# To be most effective we must deliver multiple messages to a diverse public

- You must understand your audience
  - What motivates them
  - Why should they care
  - Who or what influences them

# What motivates them

- This is important - knowing their motivations is key to achieving success
- Motivations may be very different from group to group

# Why should they care

- If we can't give them a compelling reason to change they won't
- Answer "what's in it for me". How will they be affected
- This may be very different among various audiences



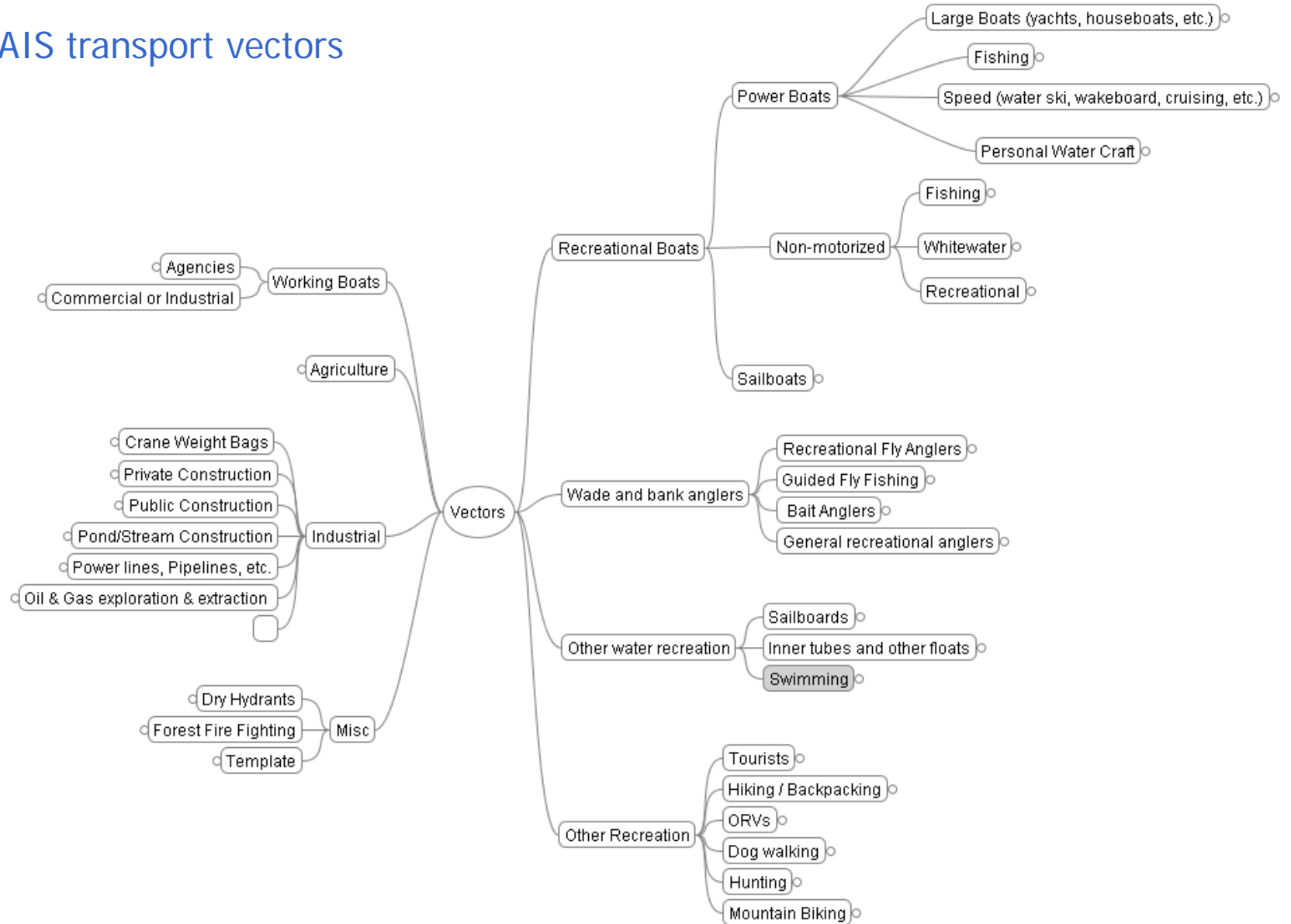
# Who or what influences them

- Everyone has things that have more influence on them than others
- Understanding what influences your target audience is critical to a successful effort.

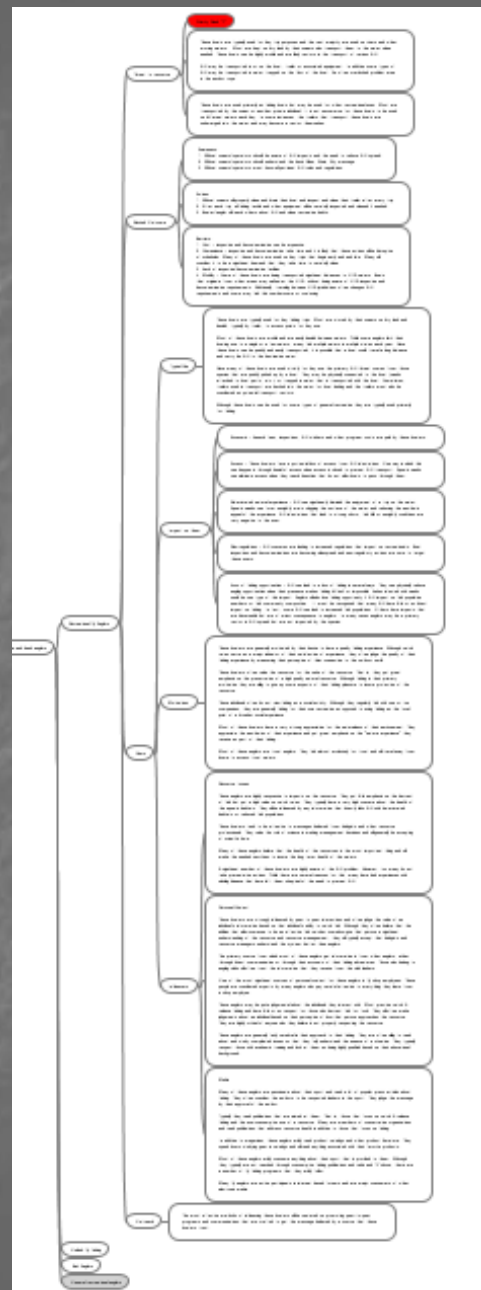
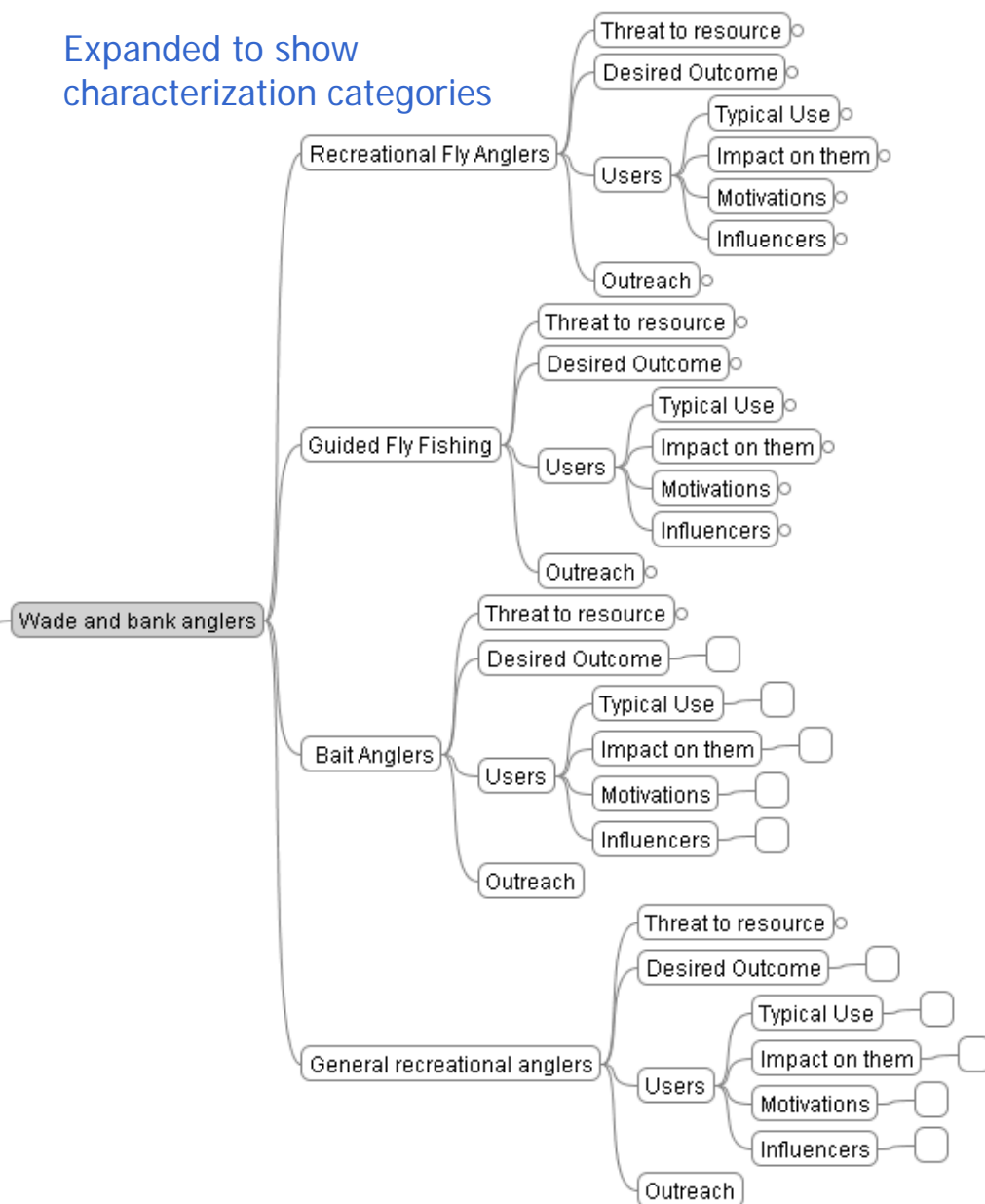
To be most effective we must deliver multiple messages to a diverse public

- You must understand your audience
  - What motivates them
  - Why should they care
  - Who or what influences them

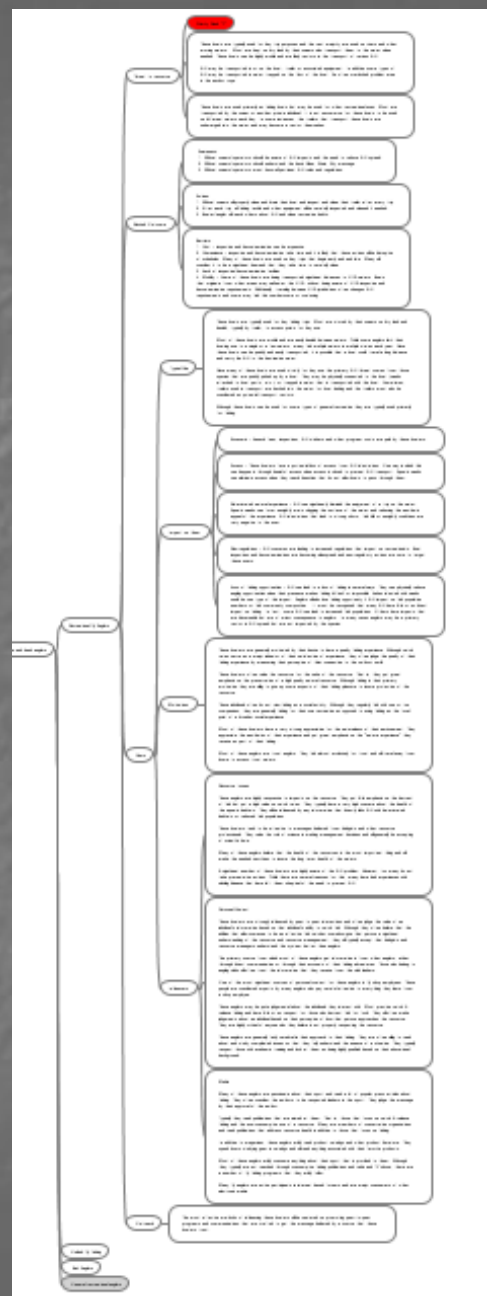
## AIS transport vectors



## Expanded to show characterization categories







## Resource Issues

These anglers are highly responsive to impacts on the resource. They put little emphasis on the harvest of fish but put a high value on catch rates. They typically have a very high concern about the health of the aquatic habitats. They will be influenced by any information that directly links AIS with deteriorated habitats or reduced fish populations.

These boaters tend to be attentive to messages delivered from biologists and other resource professionals. They value the role of science in making management decisions and will generally be accepting of scientific data.

Many of these anglers believe that the health of the resources is the most important thing and will make the needed sacrifices to insure the long term health of the waters.

A significant number of these boaters are highly aware of the AIS problem. However, too many do not take preventative actions. While there are several reasons for this, many have had experiences with whirling disease that have left them skeptical of the need to prevent AIS.

## Personal Contact

These boaters are strongly influenced by peer to peer interactions and often judge the value of an individual's information based on that individual's ability to catch fish. Although they often believe that the abilities that allow someone to be an effective fish catcher somehow give that person a significant understanding of the resource and resource management, they will typically accept that biologists and resource managers understand the system better than anglers.

The primary source from which most of these anglers get information is from other anglers, either through direct communication or through their accounts of their fishing adventures. Those who belong to angling clubs will often trust the information that they receive from the club leaders.

One of the most significant sources of personal contact for these anglers is fly shop employees. These people are considered experts by many anglers who pay careful attention to everything they learn from a shop employee.

These anglers may be quite judgmental about the individuals they interact with. Most practice catch & release fishing and have little or no respect for those who harvest fish for food. They will often make judgments about an individual based on their perception of how that person approaches the resource. They are highly critical of anyone who they believe is not properly respecting the resource.

These anglers are generally fairly cerebral in their approach to their fishing. They are often willing to read about and study complicated issues so that they fully understand the nuance of a situation. They typically respect those with academic training and look at them as being highly qualified based on their educational background.

## Media

Many of these anglers are passionate about their sport and read a lot of popular press articles about fishing. They often consider the authors to be respected leaders in the sport. They judge the message by their approval of the author.

Typically they read publications that are aimed at them. That is, those that focus on catch & release fishing and the non-consumptive use of a resource. Many are members of conservation organizations and read publications that address resource health in addition to those that focus on fishing.

In addition to magazines, these anglers avidly read product catalogs and other product literature. They spend hours studying gear in catalogs and will read anything associated with their favorite products.

Most of these anglers avidly consume anything about their sport that is provided to them. Although they typically are not reached through consumptive fishing publications and radio and TV shows, there are a number of fly fishing programs that they avidly follow.

Many fly anglers are active participants in internet based forums and are major consumers of other electronic media.

# Develop the program

- Only after careful planning should you focus on products and delivery
- Multiple products and delivery methods will be needed to properly motivate the diverse publics that must be engaged.

# Crafting the product

- Address what they want to know, not what you think they should know.
  - Don't expect them to be like you
  - Put yourself in their seat

# Tell a good story

- Try to relay a story – don't recite facts
  - Use of facts can often distract a conversation
- Keep it simple
  - Include no more than one or two main points
- Make it repeatable



# Find the right messenger

- Understand who the target group is influenced by and get them to carry the message
- Peer-to-peer is best
- Agencies and agency personnel may not be best

# Conclusions

- Many efforts increase awareness but do little to change behavior
- All AIS outreach efforts should focus on generating action
- Specific outreach efforts must be crafted to address each target audience or desired outcome
- Changing behavior is difficult and requires significant sustained effort but effective techniques are available

# Thank You

Bob Wiltshire  
Invasive Species Action Network  
406-222-7270  
[bob@stopans.org](mailto:bob@stopans.org)